



Dan Fox Family Care Program

Foster Care | Adoption | Family Support Services

July 26, 2018

Group Homes
Shelter Care
Family Care

MISSOULA
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KALISPELL
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HELENA

Dear Chairwoman Caferro, Senator Sands and Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to speak about the budget cuts and how they have affected children and families in our state. I am the Clinical and Program Director for Youth Homes' Family Care Program. The Medicaid cuts to Home Support Services have been particularly difficult for our clients, and for the various mental health centers to manage. Home Support Services serves as a preventative service for Severely Emotionally Disturbed Children to prevent foster care or to help stabilize a child with their family after they have been removed, or return from Residential Treatment.

Due to the budget cuts, we are now only able to see ½ of the clients we would normally see for Home Support Services. We have been limited to only seeing clients who live in our city centers while children and families who live outside of the city centers are no longer able to receive services from our agency because the non-reimbursed expense of traveling to the client's home. Rural children have been hurt by these cuts. I recommend that the daily rate be reinstated for Home Support Services. The current rate does not allow providers to pay for the staff that provide the service. We are looking to grants to help us offset the losses our organization has suffered so we can continue to provide HSS in a limited manner.

The Families First Prevention Services Act of 2018 recently passed by Congress and signed in to law by the President will greatly shift how our state provides services to children in the child welfare system. One of the positive aspects of this Act is the focus on the prevention of foster care for children and families. This Families First Prevention Services Act acknowledges the evidence that most often children will do better if they are to stay in their family with additional support services. With our current system and the reduced rate in place for Home Support Services, most providers have discontinued providing HSS. This means that we are losing the infrastructure and experience doing in home work with families with emotionally disturbed children. We know that evidenced based services are vital to health of our children and our communities. Once our infrastructure is lost, it will be incredibly difficult for to rebuild. And as a state, we need to be in compliance with the Families First Prevention Act effective in 2019. The reinstatement of Home Support Services would be a step in the right directions for meeting the new law's restrictions.

Lastly, please consider reinstating the 24 sessions for non SED clients for Outpatient Therapy. Many of these children who are seen for therapy have experienced trauma, abuse and neglect. By some grace they have not met criteria for an SED diagnosis and have demonstrated resiliency-however, they will need more than 10 sessions a year to maintain in their family's home. Please return to the 24 session a year limit for non-seriously emotionally disturbed youth.

Respectfully submitted,

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